

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE ABOUT LAND LOSS IN COASTAL LOUISIANA?

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Coastal Louisiana is a unique area of enormously valuable natural resources, all of which are dependent, in one sense or another, on the future existence of Louisiana's coastal landscape. This is precisely the challenge that we face – preserving, protecting, and restoring our land, our homes, and our heritage in coastal Louisiana. Louisiana's coastal wetlands are not important only because of the multibillion dollar seafood industry they support or because of their importance to waterfowl. They are nationally significant because of the physical protection from storms and hurricanes that these wetlands provide to oil and gas production and service facilities that support nearly 27% of our nation's domestic oil and gas production and nearly 15% of all foreign oil entering the United States. Louisiana coastal wetlands provide this same type of protection for over a million people that live in these coastal areas and the levee systems that surround their communities. They also help protect the multibillion dollar navigation industry that depends on adequate water depths and/or protected inland shipping channels for safe passage. These are but a few of the many economic activities that coexist with the natural attributes and environmental values most often thought of when one considers the value of wetlands to our nation.

Due to a number of natural and man-induced causes, Louisiana's coastal wetlands are being lost at a rate of from 25 to 35 square miles each and every year. That equates to about 50 acres of Louisiana's coastal landscape that is being converted to open water each and every day. Over the next 50 years it is anticipated that about 500,000 more acres of Louisiana's coastal landscape will be converted to open water. Most people would agree that the root cause of the land loss problem is the fact that, through a federal program aimed at flood protection, levees were constructed to confine flows and to direct floodwaters conveyed by the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico. Unfortunately, directing these sediment-laden floodwaters to the gulf prevents them from flowing into and nourishing the coastal landscape. These flood protection features were implemented by the Corps to protect Louisiana from flooding resulting from drainage of 41% of the continental United States, not from rainfall in the State of Louisiana.